

[REDACTED] DEBRIEFING

25X1A

Topic

Summary of Information Concerning  
Robert Flynn, U.S. Navy - (Date  
of Shootdown, 21 August 1967)

Summary

Some details of shootdown, behavior in prison,  
physical health, reaction to his captors, recent  
improvement in adjustment to prison

Date of Debrief

19 January 1972

Debreifer

[REDACTED] OMS/PSS

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OSD REVIEW COMPLETED AGAIN 10 JAN 2003

OSD HAS NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION AND RELEASE.

OSD and DPMO review(s)  
completed.

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DEBRIEFING REPORT

NAME : [ ] 25X1A

DATE OF DEBRIEF : 19 January 1972

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SUBJECT : Summary of Information Concerning  
Robert Flynn, U.S. Navy - (Date  
of Shootdown, 21 August 1967)

SUMMARY : Some details of shootdown, behavior  
in prison, physical health, reaction  
to his captors, recent improvement  
in adjustment to prison.

25X1A Although [ ] is not precisely certain about the  
month in which Flynn arrived in his cell block, it was  
probably sometime around the end of 1967. [ ] feels that 25X1A  
it was about three to four months after Flynn's shootdown.  
Although there were a couple of opportunities for whispered  
conversations between [ ] and Flynn, the majority of  
information concerning him came from [ ] DPMO  
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25X1A The group was aware that a new prisoner was in the 3.4(b))1)  
cell block across the corridor from the side in which the  
other Americans were kept. [ ] that he 25X1A  
thought it was an American because he could hear the  
interpreter talking to him. The group had been alerted  
some months previously by [ ] Chinese cell mate who 25X1A  
read an article in the Chinese language newspaper about  
the shootdown. The article stated that there had been a

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navigator bombardier by the name of Flynn captured and that his pilot Buckley was killed. The same article appeared shortly after in the periodical, "PEKING REVIEW," along with photos. That news probably came out somewhere within a month or two of Flynn's shootdown. They had, therefore, been expecting him to show up in the cell block and Smith was quite certain that the new American across from them was Flynn. Because Smith passed Flynn's cell on his way to the exercise yard, he was able one day (when the guard was walking in front rather than behind him) to lift up the cloth which covered the peep-hole and flip in a note.

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3.4(b)(1)  
DPMO  
FOIAB1  
3.4(b)(1)

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[ ] was unable to get as complete a story from Flynn as he was Smith. "Study" periods had ceased when [ ] Chinese cell mate was released in December 1967. This prevented all permissible contact between prisoners.

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[ ] pieced the following information together from notes and two whispered conversations.

Flynn said that they were flying up through North Vietnam near the North Vietnamese/Chinese border. He claimed that they were shot down by an enemy aircraft after their fighter escort flew off. He parachuted fairly close to

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Buckley and went to his assistance. There was, however, no sign of life. Buckley was dead on the ground and Flynn was quite certain that it was either a snapped neck or a snapped back that caused his death for there was no evidence of fatal wounds. Flynn requested that  pass on to the U.S. Navy that he is personally certain they did not land in Communist China. He said the Chinese claimed that he had but he is sure that he was still in North Vietnam territory.

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is not certain as to Flynn's treatment previous to his imprisonment in Peking or even to his whereabouts but believes it was neither better nor worse than what can be expected under the circumstances. Because of the fact that he was allowed to correspond, he feels that Flynn did give a bit more information than name, rank, and serial number but feels that he gave very little more.

Flynn was requested to read some Communist "study" material and make some written comments concerning same. Flynn began doing this but was advised not to by Smith. When Smith advised him not to Flynn stopped. This resulted in at least a year of violent arguments between Flynn and the interpreter. The relationship between the interpreter, on one side, and Smith and Flynn, on the other, was one of mutual disgust, hatred, and complete contempt. As a

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result, although Flynn did get his packages and got his mail, he got very little reading material, and was allowed to keep very few things in his cell.

The first opportunity [ ] had to see and personally 25X1A converse with Flynn was on a day when Flynn, typically, was arguing strongly with one of the guards in the corridor.

There was a small desk in the corridor just outside [ ] 25X1A

cell door containing the shaving equipment which people

were allowed to use once a week. Flynn apparently had

some argument concerning his razor blades. The guard

left the cell block to go out into the rotunda to look

for the interpreter. [ ] looked out his peep-hole

and asked Flynn to back up next to his door. The guard

was gone for almost 10 minutes (an extremely rare event

considering the prisoner was alone in the corridor) and

they were able to converse. A good bit of this conversation

had to do with Flynn asking for advice on what were the

best things to put into packages and talking a little bit

about his family telling [ ] about his wife and 25X1A

children and asking some questions of [ ] with regard 25X1A

to his status. Flynn was suffering from some complaints

which he appeared to suffer from all during his imprison-

ment. He was having leg cramps, intestinal upsets, and

was suffering from frequent colds. He looked somewhat

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under weight but was still in fairly good shape.

The last time that [ ] saw Flynn was an accidental 25X1A  
encounter in the toilet in which the two were able to talk  
a bit and this was only about 8 months ago (April or May  
1971). Flynn looked considerably worse at this point.  
He had lost a great deal of his hair, and looked consid-  
erably under weight. He was complaining of the same  
physical symptoms. [ ] was aware of the fact that  
for the last couple of years, especially in the winter  
months, Flynn had received numerous visits from the nurse  
and doctor and received some kind of medicine. [ ] 25X1A  
was also able to notice that the food containers for him  
sometimes contained noodles which is a sign that the  
Chinese are putting an ill prisoner on a special diet.

During the first couple of years Flynn behaved very  
much like Smith had initially. He was constantly at odds  
with his interpreter and guards and there were many flare-  
ups. A good many of these had to do with his letters.

[ ] could hear the interpreter returning his letters,  
instructing him to remove certain items from his letters,  
and telling him they would not be delivered unless he did  
so. Flynn would typically answer loudly that it was his  
right to put anything in the letters he wanted to. He  
told the interpreter the items were going to stay in and

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they could either send the letters or not as they chose.

It was [ ] feeling that these letters with those things in them did not get out. [ ] tried, [ ]

[ ] to advise Flynn to cut it down a bit in order that he be subjected to fewer confrontations, and to have the satisfaction of knowing that his letters were going home and being received by his family. Initially this did not seem to have much effect on Flynn.

During the last year or so, however, the number of loud arguments and confrontations with his guards and interrogators, which use to take place two or three times a week, were occurring far less frequently. On occasion there was some kind of altercation but he seemed to be adjusting slowly.

Flynn appeared to be as wary of the Communist reading materials as Smith did and so far as [ ] knows continued consistently to refuse to read them up until the time that [ ] left. Flynn, like Smith, seems to believe that no matter what he does or does not do he's going to be there as long as pilots remain in North Vietnam. He is confident that when the war is over he will get out. [ ]

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